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SUBJECT: MWANAWASA ON ZIMBABWE AND VIEWS OF SADC'S ROLE

REF: LUSAKA 463

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Following the visit to Zambia of Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer and National Security Council Senior Director Bobby Pittman (Ref A), the Ambassador and President Mwanawasa exchanged views on Zimbabwe through a series of letters. In his May 5 letter (para 2), President Mwanawasa acknowledged President Bush's letter that A/S Frazer delivered on April 26 and expressed his appreciation for A/S Frazer's visit. On May 6, the Ambassador underscored the need for continued SADC engagement to ensure free elections and to address reports of gross human rights violations (para 3). On May 12, President Mwanawasa responded, noting the need for a strong SADC electoral observer mission as well as a possible delegation to meet with President Mugabe, comprised of President Dos Santos, President Jakaya Kikwete, and King Mswati (para 4). President Mwanawasa also conveyed reports that Zimbabwe's Electoral Commission is ill-prepared to organize the runoffs, primarily due to inadequate resources, and expressed his intention to seek financial support from the United Nations. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On May 5, President Mwanawasa sent the following letter to President Bush, expressing his appreciation for A/S Frazer's visit and acknowledging President Bush's letter that A/S Frazer hand-delivered on April 26 (Ref A):

(begin text)

Dear Mr. President,

I thank you for your letter dated 21st April, 2008, and I was pleased to receive your Special Envoy, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs and we had a very good discussion concerning the crisis in Zimbabwe. I am pleased to note that you will continue working with us in the region to resolve the crisis in Zimbabwe.

Please accept, Mr. President, assurances of my highest consideration.

Dr. Levy P. Mwanawasa, SC
President of the Republic of Zambia

(end text)

¶3. (SBU) On May 6, the Ambassador sent the following message to President Mwanawasa, emphasizing reports of gross human rights violations in Zimbabwe, the need for free and fair elections, and the importance of continued SADC leadership:

(begin text)

Your Excellency,

I wish to express my government's gratitude for the hospitality that you extended to Assistant Secretary of State

for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer and National Security Council Senior Director Bobby Pittman during their recent visit to Zambia. I especially appreciate your readiness to accommodate our request for a meeting on such short notice and your willingness to meet with us on a Saturday night.

As SADC Chair, you have made essential contributions to regional stability by acknowledging the crisis in Zimbabwe and bringing it, once again, to the forefront of the SADC agenda. Your leadership on this issue is a credit to both you and the Republic of Zambia. Indeed, it is consistent with Zambia's historical role as a facilitator for peace within southern Africa.

The need for strong leadership is critical to the challenging period ahead, in the wake of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission's (ZEC's) announcement of the presidential election results. We understand that the ZEC did not comply with SADC's request for an inclusive verification process. According to the Movement for Democratic Change, the ZEC has refused to provide documentation to substantiate its preliminary results, which differ significantly from those posted publicly at polling stations.

The massive irregularities in the electoral process, both before and after the March 29 election, undermine the credibility of the election results and the independence of the ZEC. We hope there will be an opportunity for SADC to engage with the ZEC and the Government of Zimbabwe to ensure that both comply with the process for counting and verification as stipulated by the April 13 SADC communique.

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As discussed in your meeting with Assistant Secretary Frazer, the violence carried out by the government of Zimbabwe against its own people increases every day. The international community is receiving credible, documented accounts of torture bases and terror campaigns being used to punish those who are members of, or even sympathetic to, the political opposition. Zimbabweans who are thought to have voted for the opposition have had their houses burned, have been denied food, and have seen their family members raped and murdered. That Zimbabwean security forces are participating in these crimes makes it even more shocking. It is an unacceptable role for an institution charged with protecting its own citizens.

The great hardships that the Zimbabwean people are enduring need to end. The number of displaced persons, the shortage of food and medical care, and the escalating, government-sanctioned campaign of intimidation and violence must be of great concern to the entire southern African region. As Assistant Secretary Frazer expressed in your meeting, it is also of great concern to the United States. Our government is prepared to support you, and other SADC Heads of State, as you endeavor to find a solution to the crisis in Zimbabwe that reflects the will of its people.

Once again, I thank you for meeting with us on April 26, and for a fruitful and encouraging discussion. I look forward to an opportunity to share your insights on this situation.

Sincerely,
Carmen Martinez
Ambassador

(end text)

¶4. (SBU) In a May 12 letter, President Mwanawasa recognized the need for a strong SADC electoral observer mission, announced the possibility of a senior SADC delegation to meet with President Mugabe, comprised of President Dos Santos, President Jakaya Kikwete, and King Mswati, and conveyed his concern that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission lacks the resources to conduct the runoff elections:

(begin text)

Your Excellency,

I thank you for your letter dated 6th May, 2008, and indeed I was also delighted for an opportunity to discuss Zimbabwe with the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer and National Security Council Senior Director Bobby Pittman and yourself recently.

I have received similar reports of violence in Zimbabwe as you heard. The results have been announced although we very much doubt their veracity. It is nevertheless felt in SADC that there is nothing which can be done at the moment but for SADC and other interested organizations to insist that the run-offs should be free, fair and possess integrity. On our part we have insisted to send a strong observer mission and we have agreed that President Dos Santos who is Chairman of the Organ of SADC together with other Heads of State who are members of the Organ, namely his Excellency Jakaya Kikwete, President of Tanzania and King Mswati of Swaziland should, as soon as possible, travel to Zimbabwe to meet the Zimbabwean government and the opposition to discuss issues of security and fairness in this run-off.

We have received reports that the ZEC are not prepared for this run-off apparently because they lack financial resources. We want to assist and so does the African Union but our resources are limited so we have asked the United Nations to receive contributions from member countries who are able to contribute some funding and such funding could be availed to the ZEC and also to SADC to enable us to participate in the observer Mission. After a long period of hesitation, I am glad to note that recently Mr. Morgan Tsvangirai announced that he will participate in the run-off.

We will now continue to work for the creation of a security environment for free and fair elections to take place in Zimbabwe.

Once again I thank you for having called on me.

Yours sincerely,
Dr. Levy P. Mwanawasa, SC
President of the Republic of Zambia

(end text)

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¶5. (SBU) Comment. Post will continue to build upon A/S Frazer's visit, emphasizing to President Mwanawasa and senior GRZ officials that SADC can and should play an important role in condemning human rights violations, calling for free and fair elections, and supporting a democratic and stable electoral process. Post also will continue to draw attention to ZANU-PF's record of violence and human rights abuse with media outlets and non-governmental organizations. On May 19, Deputy Chief of Mission hosted an event for civil society leaders, during which he and the guest of honor referred to the situation in Zimbabwe and underlined the critical role that civil society can play in bringing about democratic change.

MARTINEZ